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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000238

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TAGS: PREL PGOV IR I2

SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT HASHIMI ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS,  
POLITICAL ISSUES

REF: A. BAGHDAD 209

1B. BAGHDAD 118

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Patricia A. Butenis for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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11. (S) During their January 25 meeting, the Ambassador and Vice President Hashimi discussed the Executive Council, a draft amnesty law, Mosul, Concerned Local Citizens (CLCs), and Iran. Hashimi voiced concern that PM Maliki might decrease relative authority of the Executive Council in favor of the Political Council for National Security. Hashimi confirmed that some progress had been made on addressing the Tawafuq Front's demands, but said a deal on Tawafuq's return to the government remained elusive. Hashimi continued his efforts to widen the scope of a draft amnesty law, and worried about the increasingly dangerous situation in Mosul following recent bombings there. Hashimi also expressed concerns over the Concerned Local Citizen Program, and the increasing influence of Iran. End summary.

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Executive Council: Trust But Verify  
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12. (S) Reviewing recent developments at the national leadership level, Hashimi discussed his impressions of the second meeting of the Executive Council (Ex-Co) and confirmed readouts of the meeting's substance conveyed by other sources (ref A). He worried, however, that Maliki intended to decrease relative decision-making authorities of the Ex-Co vis-a-vis the Political Council for National Security (PCNS) -- which would be a walk-back on the PM's part from what he conveyed during their first meeting (Ref B). The Ex-Co must be the "driving force, the decision maker," Hashimi said. "We're optimistic, yet cautious," he said, mentioning that a senior Da'wa Party confidante recently warned the VP that Maliki and his top advisors "had no plans to change course" (e.g., to share power with Sunnis). Hashimi confirmed the PCNS would meet on January 26, and would create a secretariat to assure its continuity and professionalism. Hashimi would press the Sadrists to rescind their recent decision to leave the PCNS, noting that a Sadrist delegation would dine with him on January 28. Full participation in the PCNS, he said, is critical, particularly on upcoming negotiations with the U.S. on strategic relations.

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Tawafuq Return Uncertain  
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3 (S) On Tawafuq's return to government, Hashimi confirmed that the issue remained on the Ex-Co agenda, but that no resolution had been reached. The Ambassador said he told

Maliki during a recent meeting that Tawafuq had signaled its interest in returning to government, but that the PM needed to "meet in the middle" on the issue of each side's demands. Maliki, he continued, took the point on board, signaling that he was "prepared" to compromise. Hashimi questioned the sincerity of the PM and especially his senior staff. He shared that he had warned the PM's Chief of Staff Tareq Abdullah in writing against taking additional retributive measures against the office staff of resigned Deputy PM Salam al-Zoubai. The warning was effective, he said. On another positive note, Hashimi confirmed that the PM's office recently agreed to a key Tawafuq Front demand: that its ministers be allowed to formally resign their positions, vice being fired, in order to retain full retirement benefits.

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Amnesty Law, Other Legislation  
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¶4. (S) Hashimi raised the draft Amnesty Law, saying that he had sent his "counter-proposal" to the Prime Minister and National Security Advisor a day earlier. The Vice President said he was pressing to have his legal advisor sit with Judge Medhat, Talabani's legal advisor, and other legal experts to sort out substantive differences. The law must be generous, "similar to previous amnesties," to be effective, he concluded. The Ambassador noted that PM Maliki had conveyed to him during a recent meeting that he wanted the amnesty legislation to be as far-reaching as constitutionally permissible.

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Mosul Attacks  
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¶5. (S) Calling the recent bombings and killing of the Mosul Police Chief a "disaster," Hashimi recalled his warnings to political leaders "for months" about the worsening situation in Ninewa Province and the need for more troops, as Al Qaida-Iraq was asserting increasing control over the city and province. Hashimi noted that he would send Maliki a letter on the situation, and press for additional attention to the key northern city. It is imperative, he continued, that representatives of the ministries of defense, interior, along with the Kurdish Peshmerga and others sit to decide a strategy to "salvage the province." The Ambassador proposed the issue be added to the agenda of the Ex-Co for its next meeting -- a suggestion Hashimi welcomed. MNF-I, the Ambassador added, was working hard to determine who was behind the attack, and to squelch rumors that put the blame for the attack on Kurds, U.S. forces, etc.

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Concerned Local Citizens  
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¶6. (S) Raising the Concerned Local Citizen (CLC) program, Hashimi called for the Ambassador's "understanding" on the growing sense of concern among Iraq's Sunni community that the program is going off-course. Details on MNF-I plans to transfer 20 percent of CLC participants into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), he said, were "too vague." The CLC's, he asserted, are not militias, but have proven themselves effective and must be encouraged. They are part of the security reality on the ground and their needs must be met, he said. If the GOI is worried about them, the best way for them to exercise control and oversight is by bringing them into the ISF. Responding, the Ambassador said that part of the problem is communication. There have already been hiring orders issued to bring nine thousand CLCs into the ISF, with others in the pipeline. The right percentage of the total CLCs to bring into the ISF, we believe, should be somewhere around 25 percent of the total. The remainder will be inducted into training programs to increase their

marketability in the labor market. The PM and other senior GOI leaders, at first skeptical about the program, now fully understand the strategic importance of the program's success, and have embraced it, the Ambassador said. Hashimi wondered aloud who would replace the CLCs in neighborhoods where maintenance of the current security situation relied upon their presence. The Ambassador assured the VP that the USG fully comprehended the strategic significance of the CLC program, and would not allow it to be muddled. Hashimi likewise assured that his Iraqi Islamic Party would act constructively, and not interfere in the program.

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Iran Issues  
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17. (S) Responding to Hashimi's question about Iranian dithering over another round of 3-way talks, the Ambassador confirmed Tehran's lack of reply on another round of talks. Hashimi noted that he was pressing with his Iraqi partners his idea to engage Iran in a direct bilateral dialogue, to "review all files" and not to focus exclusively on the 1975 treaty. Issues might include the Shatt al-Arab waterway, Iranian interference inside Iraq, etc. FM Zebari, he said, liked the idea. The Ambassador thought the idea was worth pursuing within the GOI. In a related discussion of Iranian economic interference, the Ambassador remarked on the prevalence of Iranian goods throughout Iraq. Hashimi, expressing his worry over the security implications of the situation, noted that the lack of control over Iraq's borders and its food supplies, gave Iran another weapon to use against Iraq, if it chose, by blocking food supplies.

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